



THE
BUSY BODY.

NUMBER I.

To be continued every TUESDAY, THURSDAY, and SATURDAY.

[Price TWO-PENCE.]

— *Aliena negotia curo,*
Excussus propriis —

HOR.

TUESDAY, October the 9th, 1759.



THE family of the BUSY-BODIES is so antient, that to trace it's pedigree, from the founder to the present time, would require many a volume: I shall therefore, from the mere suggestions of modesty, pass over so honourable a circumstance, though I could produce a long list of emperors, kings, princes, prime ministers, popes, cardinals, and bishops, who have done honour to our line. Let it suffice to hint, that I was born at a time, when the court, the church, the army, the long robe and the faculty, were, in a manner, engrossed by my relations: and that my education was calculated to make me as famous as any of my predecessors.

IF any instance can establish the opinion of the soul's being communicated from our parents, it can no where meet with a stronger evidence, than that which every step in our pedigree will give it; especially as there has not been the least interruption

tion of our family passion, from Edward the confessor to the present time.

It is reported of Hercules, that he gave indications of his future strength in his very cradle: and, if the numerous stories, which my nurse has related concerning me, may be credited, I may be said to have begun my race of glory, as early as Alcides. To pass over, however, all the petty actions of infancy, I shall begin my history with an exploit, which was performed the very day on which I quitted my petticoats.

My mother, who was a person of no inconsiderable charms, was very remarkable for her exclamations against connubial perfidy. My father always echoed her sentiments, and, being of a disposition contrary to that of Horace, could not draw any conclusions to the injury of her virtue, from her frequent declamations against vice. Yet, what he could not suspect, every one could see; and what he did not perceive, the whole neighbourhood laughed at.

My father having taken me abroad with him, on this my admission to the honour of the breeches, called at the house of an acquaintance, and left me to the care of the servants, while he went up stairs to visit their lady who was sick. During his absence, I was not, nay I could not be idle; for in the interval I not only learnt the whole inventory of the apartment I was left in, but likewise had acquainted myself of the possibility of moving every piece of the furniture; founding my knowledge, like the Newtonians, upon the firm basis of repeated experiments.—I had the happiness to break two china jars, and seventeen fine old enamelled tea-cups; I scratched the surfaces of three large mahogany tables, and let a marmoset loose, who gave me a grin of thanks for his liberty, and made the best of his way to a neighbouring wood.

When my father re-joined me, I was fallen into that state of langour, which generally succeeds too great an exertion of activity; and, should not have been able to have committed any farther mischief with my hands, whatever schemes had been formed in my head.

On our return home, my mother, as usual, received my father with all that warmth of love, which generally attends the first thirty days of matrimony; and met with that return of glowing affection from my father, which would have been due to her ardour, had it not been personated. As chance would have it, he had left his handkerchief in his great coat pocket, which

which hung in the cloath's-press, in the room, wherein the assumed character of matrimonial affection had just been played by my mother. On his signifying his want of the handkerchief, I fled with the wings of officious haste to the press; and, as soon as I had opened the door; heavens! what did I behold! — a brawny young officer, who had passed some weeks at our house, as a relation of my mother's; and, on that account, had been entertained with undisssembled civility by my too credulous father.

DISCOVERIES were things I was always fond of; and in consequence of my natural propensity, I ran immediately to my father to tell him what I had seen. On my first information, he refused me that credit, which was due to artless childhood; because our cousin had two days before taken leave of us, with the warmest acknowledgments of obligation, and set out for his seat in Yorkshire. My positiveness, in some measure, overcoming my father's incredulity; he was persuaded to receive that conviction of my veracity by his sight, which he had resolved not to admit by his hearing: and finding my assertion true, paid my cousin all those civilities, which were due to his singular modesty. My mother instead of receiving any marks of resentment for her perfidy, was applauded for the preference she had given our cousin: and that my father might not be an obstacle to their future interviews, she was desired to suit herself with a place, where she might enjoy the sweets of her relation's converse, without being forced to buy them with blushes, or conceal them by dissimulation.

THIS glorious event depriving our family of it's mistress, I was sent to board at a city, in the West, which was formerly so famous for the number of it's religious houses, that it became a proverb expressive of certainty, to say, "as sure as God was in it." Many uncommon incidents owing to my officious activity in this seat of learning, are still remembered by it's governors; I thought it no small recommendation, when I left it, to be expelled from thence, for having discovered more plots to the master, and carried more tales of the scholars, than any one before me; or, in all probability, that will ever follow me.

ON my quitting this famous academy, I was bound apprentice to a glover, and haberdasher of hats; who was well qualified to perfect me in my innate talent of officiousness.

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And, when the reader is informed, that he was a near relation of the family of the BUSY-BODIES, one of the common-council, a captain in the city militia, and deputy of his ward; I doubt not, but I shall be credited, and allowed to give him his due praise, without the least suspicion of ostentatious adulation.

AT the expiration of my time, I set up near the Change, because it was a situation best suited to furnish me with frequent opportunities of displaying my abilities. As I formed my conduct on the hint given us by Sallust, in his character of Julius Cæsar, "that he was so industrious to promote the interest of his friends, "as to forget and neglect the prosecution of his own;" I need not say how much I was respected by all my acquaintance. My neighbours, to this day, lament my misfortunes; because they are thereby involved in absolute ignorance of the secrets of each other's families.

THE accounts I used to give them of the particulars brought by mails, which never arrived; the characters I have drawn of deceased noblemen, who are still living; the plans I have received of battles which were never fought; and the projects I have displayed, "for raising the supplies, beating the French, making all, "and injuring none;" like the great Henriques born anno 1683, are topics which I have expatiated on to admiring crowds; and which have endear'd my memory to those who heard them. These indeed, are subjects to which their ears are now strangers, and would be so to their eyes, did I not still continue to dispence my knowledge, to the DIGNIFIED author of the *letters to the people of England*, the profound writer of the Monitor, and the thrice celebrated Probus, Britannicus, Civis, Amicus, &c. who pour forth their political treasures in the Gazetteer, the Chronicle, or the London Evening.

As I have given hints of my misfortunes, it will not be amiss to present the reader with some account of their rise and progress, and, from thence leave him to draw conclusions, in favour of my disinterested and unbiaffed patriotism.

At the time of the late rebellion, being somewhat high in my political principles, my shop was the general resort for the North-Britons, who not only favoured me with the most early accounts of the motions of their brethren; but likewise honoured me with their orders for hats and gloves, in the wholesale way — upon credit: and, as a testimony of their friendship, procured me an original painting of the youthful commander of the disaffected.

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As the accounts of victories, which they gave me, proved false, and greatly injured my political character, so the frequent drafts of country correspondents, obliged me to draw likewise on my news-mongers to support my credit; but deceiving me in this, as they had done in every former instance, I was compelled to call my creditors together, who were contented to receive all I had, and generously gave me a release, for what I had not.

BEING thus delivered from the care of a shop, I applied myself wholly to the affairs of the nation; but as hints for the publick good do not always yield the projector a present subsistence, I was obliged to make the exchange of Dionysius, who, from an emperor, became a school-master: and, according to the advice of Cato, in the tragedy, “to crowd every virtue into the short span of our existence,” I dedicate the vacations from my employment to projects and politics. The city of London has been indebted to me, for several schemes, which have been adopted by its chief magistrates, and have rendered it conspicuous in the eyes of all Europe. I first gave the hint for the Guild-hall subscription; I taught the inhabitants of Westminster loyalty; and the bridge at Black-friers, was a plan of my own.

BUT, at once to conclude this short sketch of my history, and assign the reasons for my engaging in a work of this nature;

BE IT KNOWN, that going, the other day, through Newgate-street, meditating on a project, like that of Gulliver's, to run away with the whole French fleet; I saw a great crowd, which operating so strongly on my senses, as to obliterate every idea I had formed for my country's good; I rushed immediately into the midst of it for information, and found it occasioned by two carmen, who were exercising themselves after the manner of the pugilators, so much celebrated in the Circensian games.

As I observed the major part of the mob biased in favour of one of the combatants, humanity persuaded me to espouse the cause of the other; and, as most of my virtues consist in action, according to the school definition; I stooped down to disengage my favourite combatant from the load of his adversary, who had fallen upon him; but, in the attempt, received a kick from one of the surrounding multitude, which broke my leg. Prostrated by this accident, and being hindered by the sensations of anguish from making any efforts to rise; the company imagined, at first, that I had been in a fit; one of the most experienced tweaked me by the nose, a second forced open my hands, struck me on the palm, with all the strength he was master of; and

and a third, very humanely, drenched me with some water, which he had scooped with his hat from a neighbouring kennel. But as these remedies proved no specifics against a fracture, I was raised by two men, with an intent to convey me down Ivy-lane, to Dr. Rock's on Ludgate-hill; falsely imagining that his skill in one of the branches of surgery, was a plain indication that he was master of all. In my way to that famous empiric's, my conductors happening to pitch me at the door of a bookseller, whom I formerly had some respect for, on account of the similitude of our dispositions; I desired to be introduced to him; and found an asylum under his hospitable roof. After my leg was set, I was accommodated with a bed; and staid with him near a month. During those intervals, in which pain subsided, and affliction became tolerable; I had frequent conferences with my friend on the state of affairs in the literary world; the best means of supporting publick credit, and the proper preliminaries to be insisted on, whenever France shall be obliged to beg, and our great statesman shall condescend to grant them, peace. But being sensible that my present accident would render me incapable of making my usual circuits in quest of information: I proposed the plan of the present paper, wherein I intend, occasionally, to communicate not only those anecdotes which I have already acquired by my own officiousness; but likewise those which may be transmitted to me by that of others. And as the instruction of statesmen, churchmen, admirals, generals, petit-mâîtres, belles and citizens, is the object of the present publication: I request all of them to favour me with their assistance, that this work may contain, not only every thing that a BUSY-BODY would wish to publish, but likewise all that a BUSY-BODY would desire to know.

✿ IN order to oblige such of my relations, as choose to promote my work, Mr. POTTINGER, my publisher, at the *Dunciad* in Pater-noster-Row, has, in allusion to his own sign, and to the fable of Apuleius, placed a *Golden Ass* in his shop, to receive their offerings; and I doubt not but their contributions will make his *Ass* as famous for its wit, as *Button's Lion* was for its eloquence.